

Local

A Sherman soft opening

BY HOLLI ESTRIDGE
HERALD DEMOCRAT

The Sherman Town Center shortened the drive time for many local residents craving retail therapy Saturday.

The "soft" opening of Belk, Target, Famous Footware, Payless and PetCo drew droves of shoppers from the freeway, as people discovered packed parking lots, slick "open" signs and a live, waving Belkie Bear.



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A customers makes an exchange at PetCo during the store's soft opening.

In the background, construction crews prepared the site of the future Cheddar's Restaurant, as shoppers stepped casually over the medians that were still rough and without landscaping.

PetCo, the southernmost anchor retailer, threw open its doors to shoppers and pets alike. Kristen West of Sherman traversed the store with two pet dogs and her young

cousins, who gazed at a wide variety of fish. "I feel like Sherman is just growing and growing and growing," West said. "It's like McKinney, Allen and Dallas are all moving this way."

The rush of customers to the opening of many of the center's new stores took people into Payless Shoe Store, which also operates an additional store in Sherman and a Denison location.

"We're just welcoming everybody," Store Manager Deedee Cushman said. "We actually opened Wednesday at 1, but people had not really noticed that we opened."

Denison High School students Meagan Wagoner and Anna Blount stepped into Target for a look at shoes, but came away with swimming suits and undergarments. "We've been waiting and waiting for Target to open," Wagoner said. "They have all kinds of cute stuff."

Target Store Team Leader Michael Caufield said the soft opening brought a good turn out. "People are coming in and liking what we have to offer them," he said. Caufield mentioned that the store is offering extended departments with products that other Target stores do not carry.

"The grocery department has refrigerated and frozen items, including meats, breads, cereals, teas," he said. "We have a lot more than other Targets." The store also has a Starbucks's Coffee House and a phar-

macy.

Shauna Saffa, a 21-year-old from Denison, beckoned customers to the bright new Belk store from underneath a bear costume. The bear wore a red hoodie with the name "Belkie" emblazoned across the front.

"Can you tuck in my neck?" she requested of Belk employee Linda Sneed, as she became poised to wave at the next car in line to enter the new center.

Belk management received many compliments on the new store. Store Manager Scott Rundell said. "People like the brands, the size, lay-out of the store, brightness and service," he said.

The new store is part of the company's big move into Texas. Belk has already opened stores in Paris and Greenville and has a McKinney store slated for the near future. Saturday's opening coincided with other Belk openings in Waco and Kerrville.

Lisa Townsend looked around at the store as her friend received a make-over at the Lancome make-up counter. "The people who work here are very friendly," the Sherman woman said. "And, it's such a bright and shiny store. I just had to come and see what was here."

More stores are set to open in the center in the new future. Among them are Red Lobster, Chic-Fil-A, Panera Bread, Books a Million, Pier One, Bed, Bath and Beyond, and Ross Dress for Less.



The Belk bear in the flesh.



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